

Testimony by Councilmember Nancy Floreen before the Maryland State
Transportation Task Force
Rockville, Maryland November 24, 2003

Thank you Mr. Hellman and members of the Task Force for allowing me to address you this evening. Thank you also for the valuable work you have undertaken for all the people of the State of Maryland.

I speak to you tonight representing the Montgomery County Council as chair of the Council's Transportation & Environment Committee.

Transportation congestion is a drag on our economic vitality and the quality of life for our families. Except for assuring the public safety and for education of our children, there is no greater priority for state and local government.

Your commission is looking at various options to raise \$1.8 billion over six years – or \$300 million a year. MDOT estimates that it needs \$17.1 billion for FYs 2005-2010 to fund its full needs statewide. MDOT's current funding will only cover 38% of its needs. If the Commission adds \$300 million a year, that amount will fund only 67% of the State's needs. To fund the State's full needs as stated by MDOT itself, we need to add \$1.27 billion a year -- more than four times as much.

And even that MDOT figure is understated. It assumes only \$529 million for transit capital expansion in FY 2005-2010, much lower than the cost of the \$2 billion Purple Line/Bi-County Transitway, \$800 million for the Corridor Cities Transitway, and several billion for rail expansion in the Baltimore region.

That's why, with all due respect, \$1.8 billion over six years isn't close to "good enough." We can't afford to sell our transportation needs short. We have to think bigger.

In Montgomery County alone, the State funding need in Montgomery County over the next 10 years is \$6 billion – as reflected in the County's 10-year transportation blueprint approved by the Council. Prorated over the next 6 years, this means it needs to spend \$3.6 billion more in Montgomery County in FY 2005-2010. The State would have to raise much more funding than the Commission is currently considering just to meet Montgomery County's needs alone.

In the decade of 1990-2000, Montgomery County had 21.4% of Maryland's population growth and 25.3% of its employment growth, but received only 10% of State highway funding and only 20% of State transit funding.

And you must remember that our area's needs don't begin and end with the folks living within our borders.

For many commuters living in Frederick County, Howard County, and Prince George's County, the congested portion of their commute is in Montgomery County. Twenty-two percent of Frederick County workers labor in our County. So do almost ten percent of Howard County and Prince George's County workers. And thousands of others from other Maryland counties work in Montgomery.

The bottom line is that when you spend on projects in Montgomery County you are helping more than just Montgomery County. You are giving a "leg-up" to the whole region.

The most benefit can be provided to these commuters from other counties by building certain improvements in Montgomery County, such as: the Bi-County Transitway; the Corridor Cities Transitway; the Intercounty Connector; HOV lanes on I-270; the interchanges at US 29/Fairland Road; and many other "bread-and-butter" projects that don't get the headlines but are critical to our ability to battle traffic congestion.

The truth is that the transportation pie needs to be much bigger – and Montgomery County, as the state's economic engine, ought to get its fair share. We have to think about real solutions to our transportation crunch, not half-measures that only allow things to get worse less slowly.

Thank you for your consideration and good luck with the work ahead of you. We stand ready to assist you in whatever way possible.